

Dyker Heights Athletic Association / St. Bernadette “The Knights”
NFL Flag Football Rulebook for Rookie (ages 7-8)
Junior Varsity Division (ages 9-11) and Varsity (ages 12-15) Division

SECTION 1: EQUIPMENT

- 1.1. Official NFL Flag Football jerseys must be worn during play. Official sweatpants also must be worn – they may be shortened.
- 1.2. All teammates must wear jerseys of the same color.
- 1.3. Jerseys must be tucked in sweatpants so that they do not interfere with the opponents’ opportunity to pull the flags.
- 1.4. Flags must be worn on side of hips.
- 1.5. A player must have both flags properly secured to his belt in order to be an eligible receiver. (Exception: See rule 9.9 g.).
- 1.6. Player may not mix old flags with the new belts and sockets, or new flags with old belts and sockets.
- 1.7. All flag belts must be worn with their corresponding flags. Mixing different colored belts and flags will not be permitted.
- 1.8. Should a player leave the excess of his flag belt, also known as the “third flag,” dangling outside his pants and it is pulled by the defense, the ball will be spotted as if a regular flag had been pulled. Should the “third flag” come out as a result of the play, and be pulled by the defense, the play will not be stopped, and neither team will be penalized.
- 1.9. If the flag falls off a ball carrier while he has possession of the ball, the play is dead where the flag fell off the player.
- 1.10. If the entire flag belt begins to fall off the ball carrier while he has possession of the ball, it will be in the judgment of the referee whether or not to call the play dead based on whether or not the referee believes the defense still has a legitimate chance to pull the flag.
- 1.11. Molded rubber cleats may be worn, but not metal. Inspections will be made
- 1.12. Gloves may be worn.
- 1.13. Headwear containing any hard, unyielding, stiff material, including billed hats or items containing exposed knots are not permitted
- 1.14. It is the responsibility of the coach, not the referee, to ensure shirts, flags, and all equipment is worn and positioned properly.

SECTION 2: BASIC GAME RULES

- 2.1. If possible, each game should be played with seven (7) players on defense and seven (7) players on offense.
- 2.2. Each team must have a minimum of five (5) players at all times. A team shall forfeit if it cannot field the required minimum of five (5) players.
- 2.3. In the event of a team having only five (5) players, the opposing team may still use seven (7) players.
- 2.4. Every player present must play approximately half of the game. Subject to league review.
- 2.5. A coin toss determines first possession. The toss will be called by the visiting team’s captain before the coin is flipped. The team that wins the coin toss has three (3) options. They are the following:

- a. Receive: The winner takes the ball and the loser chooses which goal to defend. At the second half, the loser of the toss has the option to receive or defend.
 - b. Defend: The winner may choose which goal to defend and gives the loser possession. At the second half the loser still has the option to receive or defend.
 - c. Defer: The winner may defer to the second half. In this case the loser of the toss is now given the option to receive or defend in the first half and the winner has the option to receive or defend in the second half.
- 2.6. Ball starts at the 20 yard line.
- 2.7. A team has the option to punt on any down. (For further information see “Section 3: The Punt)
- 2.8. If a team returns a punt or intercepts a ball and gain possession prior to the 40-yard line, they have four opportunities (downs) to reach the 40-yard line.
- 2.9. If the offense reaches the 40-yard line, the offense is awarded a first down and has four opportunities (downs) to score a touchdown.
- 2.10. If the offense fails to reach the 40-yard line, after choosing not to punt, the ball will be turned over to the opposing team at the spot of the ball after fourth down.
- 2.11. If a team returns a kick or intercepts a ball and gain possession past the 40-yard line they have four opportunities (downs) to score a touchdown.
- 2.12. If the offense fails to score a touchdown, after choosing not to punt, the ball will be turned over to the opposing team at the spot of the ball after fourth down.
- 2.13. During each possession a team may cross the 40-yard line once and receive a first down. If because of a penalty, play, etc. a team has lost yardage and is crossing the 40-yard line again during the same possession, no first down shall be awarded and the above rules still apply.
- 2.14. No blocking.
- 2.15. Set picks are permitted.
- 2.16. Set picks are defined as maneuvers in which one or more players prevent(s) a defender(s) from gaining access to the ball carrier, without moving or making significant contact with a defender(s).
- 2.17. Should the center, or any other offensive player, make contact with any defensive player(s) rushing the quarterback, blocking will be called. It is the responsibility of the offensive player to avoid contact, whether it is intentional or not. Exception: Should a defensive player intentionally make contact with an offensive player with the express purpose of inducing a blocking call, the referee, at his judgment, may call an illegal contact penalty on the defense.
- 2.18. No player, whether on offense or defense, may keep another player from advancing by grabbing him and/or holding him back.
- 2.19. Fumbles are not permitted. Ball is dead when and where it touches the ground.
- 2.20. Muffed handoffs are considered fumbles and cannot be attained by the defense, regardless of whether or not the ball hits the ground. However, should the ball not hit the ground, play will not be stopped.
- 2.21. While considered “fumbles” should they hit the ground, the defense may intercept backward or lateral passes.
- 2.22. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
- 2.23. Coaches are not permitted on the playing field at any point during a play, or “live ball.”
- 2.24. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier’s flags are, not where the ball is.

- 2.25. If the flags of the ball carrier break the plane of the goal line, a touchdown shall be awarded.
- 2.26. Returns are permitted on interceptions.
- 2.27. The referee will call all penalties.
- 2.28. No rule decision may be changed after the ball is next legally snapped.

SECTION 3: PUNT

- 3.1. A team has the option to punt on any down.
- 3.2. Teams must declare all punts.
- 3.3. Fake punts are not permitted.
- 3.4. During a punt, there are seven(7) players on the punting team, and seven (7) players on the receiving team.
- 3.5. All scrimmage line rules regarding the snap, encroachment, false start, minimum line players, motion and too many men on the field apply to all punts.
- 3.6. Any member of the punting team may down the ball anywhere in the field of play.
- 3.7. Once the ball is punted, any receiving team player may block the kick.
- 3.8. If the blocked punt hits the ground, it is dead at that spot and possession is given to the receiving team.
- 3.9. Any punt that is blocked, does not hit the ground and does not cross the line of scrimmage can be recovered and advanced by either team. However, if offensive team recovers it must make the yardage necessary for its first down to retain possession if punt was on fourth down.
- 3.10. Any punt that is blocked, does not hit the ground and crosses the line of scrimmage can be recovered by either team, but can only be advanced by the receiving team. The kicking team may never advance its own kick when legal recovery is made beyond the line of scrimmage.
- 3.11. If a receiver fails to catch the punt and the ball touches him (no possession), it is considered a muff and can be recovered by the kicking team but not advanced. The kicking team may never advance its own kick when legal recovery is made beyond the line of scrimmage.
- 3.12. Once the receiving team has possession, the ball cannot be fumbled and is dead where fumbled.
- 3.13. Only backward or lateral handoffs are permitted on all kick/punt returns.

SECTION 4: SCORING

- 4.1. A touchdown shall be six (6) points.
- 4.2. A one (1) point conversion shall be played from the 5-yard line.
- 4.3. A two (2) point conversion shall be played from the 10-yard line.
- 4.4. A safety shall be two (2) points.

SECTION 5: TIMING

- 5.1. Games are played with (30) minute halves running time.
- 5.2. There will be a five (5) minute halftime.
- 5.3. The official game timekeeper will be made known to both teams prior to the start of the game and will be responsible for starting and stopping the game clock at the appropriate time.

- 5.4. Each time the ball is spotted, all markers are placed and the referees are in position, a whistle will be blown indicating a team has thirty-five (35) seconds to snap the ball.
- 5.5. Each team has three (3) one-minute time outs per half.
- 5.6. A team must make its request for a time out to the game referees only.
- 5.7. The official game timekeeper will only recognize requests for a time out from the referee.
- 5.8. During the final 2 minutes of the second and fourth periods the clock will stop for a:
 - a. Defensive Penalty and administration – starts on the snap
 - b. Either team is awarded a new series following a legal punt – starts on the snap
 - c. First down – starts on the snap.
 - d. Fumble – starts on the ready
 - e. Incomplete legal forward pass – starts on the snap.
 - f. Inadvertent whistle – starts on the ready
 - g. Offensive Penalty and administration – starts on the ready
 - h. Out-of-bounds – starts on the snap.
 - i. Referee’s time-out – starts at his/her discretion.
 - j. Safety – starts on the snap.
 - k. Team time-out – starts on the snap.
 - l. Touchback – starts on the snap.
 - m. Touchdown – starts on the snap (after the try)
 - n. Turn over on downs/Change of Possession – starts on the snap
- 5.9. In last 2 minutes of the half and the game, the clock does not run on extra points attempts.
- 5.10. Officials may stop the clock at their discretion.

SECTION 6: DEAD BALL

- 6.1. Play is ruled dead when:
 - a. ball carrier’s flag is pulled or falls out
 - b. ball carrier steps out of bounds
 - c. the ball touches the ground
 - d. ball carrier’s knee or hand hits the ground
 - e. ball carrier dives

SECTION 7: FORMATIONS

- 7.1. No part of any offensive player (other than the center) may be lined up beyond the line of scrimmage.
- 7.2. Ball must be snapped between center’s legs.
- 7.3. Shotgun snapping is permitted.
- 7.4. Only one offensive player may be in motion prior to the snap.
- 7.5. Forward motion toward the line of scrimmage, prior to snap, is prohibited.
- 7.6. Once the offensive team is set at the line of scrimmage and is awaiting the snap, no offensive player, other than the one that is permitted to be in motion, may leave his stance and move prior to the ball being snapped.
- 7.7. Once the offensive team is set at the line of scrimmage and is awaiting the snap, the snapper (center) may not shift or move the ball, flex his elbows, jerk his head or make any movement that, in the referee’s judgment, may cause the defense to go offside.
- 7.8. The defense may use any formation.
- 7.9. No part of any defensive player may be lined up beyond the line of scrimmage.

- 7.10. The Rusher can be at the line of scrimmage and can go back at least five feet from the line of scrimmage. Upon the count of three, the rusher immediately can rush the quarterback
- 7.11. The defense cannot rush until the count of three.
- 7.12. At least one defensive player must always rush the quarterback.
- 7.13. The word “hike” is not the signal to enable the defense to rush. The quarterback may draw the defense offside.
- 7.14. Any defensive player may immediately rush the quarterback once the ball is handed off, pitched or passed.
- 7.15. On the count of three any defensive player, regardless of where they were positioned, may rush the quarterback.
- 7.16. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage.

SECTION 8: THE RUNNING GAME

- 8.1. A “No Run Zone” exists, beginning at three (3) yards before the goal line, in each direction, where the offense may not run the ball across the line of scrimmage. They must pass.
- 8.2. Teams may hand off in the “No Run Zone,” but they still are required to pass.
- 8.3. The quarterback may carry the ball across the line of scrimmage after the count of three. Only backward or lateral handoffs are permitted beyond the line of scrimmage.
- 8.4. Unlimited handoffs and pitches are permitted behind the line of scrimmage.
- 8.5. The center may only receive a handoff after he is completely out of the crouching position.
- 8.6. No pitches or passes are permitted once any part of the ball carrier has crossed the line of scrimmage.
- 8.7. Spinning and jumping are allowed.
- 8.8. Diving is not permitted.
- 8.9. The act of diving is defined as when a player leaves his feet to avoid a defensive player and he does not land on his feet.
- 8.10. If the ball carrier dives, it is a dead ball and the ball is spotted where the ball carrier’s feet were positioned prior to the dive.
- 8.11. Ball carriers (including the quarterback), whether intentional or not, shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag from the belt. Examples of flag guarding include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Placing or swinging the hand or arm over the flag.
 - b. Placing the ball in possession over the flag .
 - c. Lowering the shoulders in such a manner which places the arm over the flag belt.

SECTION 9: THE PASSING GAME / OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE

- 9.1. No part of the passer may be beyond the line of scrimmage while he is throwing a forward pass.
- 9.2. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage). (Exception: See rule 1.04 c.)
- 9.3. An offensive team may make only one forward pass during each play from scrimmage.

- 9.4. Intentional grounding will be called when a passer, facing an imminent loss of yardage due to pressure from the defense, throws a forward pass without a realistic chance of completion.
- 9.5. Regardless of whether the passer throws a pass that lands at or beyond the line of scrimmage, intentional grounding will be called if no offensive player(s) have a realistic chance to catch the ball.
- 9.6. There is no “in the pocket rule” as so defined in National Football League rules.
- 9.7. A player must have control of the ball with at least one foot in bounds for a legal reception.
- 9.8. Players may not go out of bounds and comes back in bounds again, and be the first one to touch the football. The referee will immediately indicate where the player(s) went out of bounds by tossing his hat.
- 9.9. Actions that constitute defensive pass interference include but are not limited to:
 - a. Contact by a defender who is not playing the ball and such contact restricts the receiver’s opportunity to make the catch.
 - b. Playing through the back of a receiver in an attempt to make a play on the ball.
 - c. Grabbing a receiver’s arm(s) in such a manner that restricts his opportunity to catch a pass.
 - d. Extending an arm across the body of a receiver thus restricting his ability to catch a pass, regardless of whether the defender is playing the ball.
 - e. Cutting off the path of a receiver by making contact with him without playing the ball.
 - f. Hooking a receiver in an attempt to get to the ball in such a manner that it causes the receiver’s body to turn prior to the ball arriving.
 - g. A defender pulls the flag of any receiver before he catches a pass.
- 9.10. Actions that do not constitute defensive pass interference include but are not limited to:
 - a. Incidental contact by a defender’s hands, arms, or body when both players are competing for the ball, or neither player is looking for the ball. If there is any question whether contact is incidental, the ruling shall be no interference.
 - b. Inadvertent tangling of feet when both players are playing the ball or neither player is playing the ball.
 - c. Contact that would normally be considered pass interference, but the pass is clearly uncatchable by the involved players.
 - d. Laying a hand on a receiver that does not restrict the receiver in an attempt to make a play on the ball.
 - e. Contact by a defender who has gained position on a receiver in an attempt to catch the ball.
 - f. Contact by a defender that is obviously away from the direction of the pass.
- 9.11. Actions that constitute offensive pass interference include but are not limited to:
 - a. Initiating contact with a defender by shoving or pushing off thus creating a separation in an attempt to catch a pass.
 - b. Driving through a defender who has established a position on the field.
- 9.12. Actions that do not constitute offensive pass interference include but are not limited to:
 - a. Incidental contact by a receiver’s hands, arms, or body when both players are competing for the ball or neither player is looking for the ball.

- b. Inadvertent touching of feet when both players are playing the ball or neither player is playing the ball.
 - c. Contact that would normally be considered pass interference, but the ball is clearly uncatchable by involved players.
- 9.13. Defensive players have as much right to the path of the ball as eligible offensive players.
- 9.14. Pass interference for both teams ends when the pass is touched.
- 9.15. There can be no pass interference at or behind the line of scrimmage, but defensive actions such as restricting a receiver can still result in a three (3) yard penalty for defensive holding, if accepted.

SECTION 10: ILLEGAL CONTACT/ROUGHING THE PASSER/ROUGHING THE KICKER

- 10.1. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- 10.2. Actions that constitute offensive illegal contact include but are not limited to:
- a. Ball carrier may not lower his shoulder, nor deliberately run/dive into a defender, nor straight-arm.
- 10.3. Actions that constitute defensive illegal contact include but are not limited to:
- a. Defender may not grasp or otherwise obstruct the ball carrier while in the process of removing the flag.
 - b. Defender may not tackle the ball carrier.
 - c. Defender may not push ball carrier out of bounds.
 - d. Defender may not attempt to strip the ball from the ball carrier.
- 10.4. If a runner is tackled, held or in some way hindered by the last defender, referee at his discretion may award a touchdown.
- 10.5. Actions that constitute roughing the passer include but are not limited to:
- a. Making contact with passer's throwing arm.
 - b. Defender may make contact with the ball while it is in possession of the passer.
 - c. Defender may not tackle the passer.
 - d. Defender may not push passer out of bounds.
 - e. Defender makes any contact with the passer with no attempt to de-flag the passer.
 - f. Defender fails to stop motion into the passer after the ball has been passed.
- 10.6. Actions the constitute roughing the kicker include but are not limited to:
- a. Making contact with kicker's throwing arm.
 - b. Defender may not tackle the kicker.
 - c. Defender may not push kicker out of bounds.
 - d. Defender makes any contact with the kicker with no attempt to de-flag the kicker.
 - e. Defender fails to stop motion into the kicker after the ball has been kicked.
- 10.7. Defender may make contact with the ball while it is in possession of kicker.

SECTION 11: SPORTSMANSHIP/EJECTIONS

- 11.1. Referees have the right to determine any unsportsmanlike conduct not specifically listed below.
- 11.2. Trash talking is considered unsportsmanlike conduct and will penalized as such.
- 11.3. Game referees as well as DHAA/St. Bernadette game directors determine offensive language.

- 11.4. If offensive language occurs referee will (or will be instructed by a DHAA/St. Bernadette game director to) throw a penalty flag for unsportsmanlike conduct and give an ejection warning.
- 11.5. If offensive language continues referee will (or will be instructed by a DHAA/St. Bernadette game director to) to throw another penalty flag for unsportsmanlike conduct and eject the player(s) from the game.
- 11.6. Spiking the flag after a pull or spiking the ball after a reception is considered unsportsmanlike conduct and will be penalized as such.
- 11.7. If a DHAA/St. Bernadette game director or referee witness any acts of repeated tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player may be ejected from the game.
- 11.8. If a coach, player or spectator is ejected from the game, the DHAA/St. Bernadette game directors reserve the right to ask the coach, player or spectator to leave the Bath Beach Park entirely.
- 11.9. If they refuse to leave the Bath Beach Park entirely and the director or game referee determines that because of this refusal the game can not be continued, the team that the coach, player or spectator is associated with, shall forfeit the game.

SECTION 12: PENALTY ENFORCEMENTS

<u>Defensive Penalties</u>				
Penalty	Violates Rule(s):	Yardage (JV / Varsity)	Enforced from the:	Comments
Defensive Illegal Contact	10.3	5/10 and automatic first down	Spot of the ball at the end of the play.	
Defensive Pass Interference	9.9	Automatic first down	Spot of the foul	May be declined
Holding	2.18	3/5 and automatic first down	Line of Scrimmage	May be declined
Illegal Equipment	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.6, 1.7, 1.13	3/5	Line of Scrimmage	May be declined
Offside	7.9, 7.10, 7.12, 7.13	3/5	Line of Scrimmage	May be declined
Roughing the Passer/Kicker	10.5, 10.6	5/10 and automatic first down	Spot of the ball at the end of the play.	
Too Many Men on the Field	2.1, 3.4, 3.16	3/5	Line of Scrimmage	May be declined
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	Section 11	5/10 and automatic first down	Spot of the ball at the end of the play.	

Offensive Penalties

Penalty	Violates Rule(s):	Yardage (JV / Varsity)	Enforced from the:	Comments
Blocking	2.14-2.17	3/5 and a loss of a down	Spot of the foul	Safety if foul occurs in end zone
Delay of Game	5.4	3/5	Line of Scrimmage	See rule 5.04 b.
				Dead ball immediately when called.
False Start	7.6, 7.7	3/5	Line of Scrimmage	Dead ball immediately when called.
Holding	2.18	3/5	Line of Scrimmage	May be declined
Illegal Equipment	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.6, 1.7, 1.13	3/5	Line of Scrimmage	May be declined
Illegal Pass	8.3, 8.7, 9.1	3/5 and a loss of a down	Spot of the foul	Safety if foul occurs in end zone
Illegal Motion	7.4, 7.5	3/5	Line of Scrimmage	May be declined
Illegal Procedure	8.1, 8.2	No yardage. Loss of a down only.	N/A	Dead ball immediately when called.
Illegal Shift	7.5	3/5 and a loss of a down	Line of Scrimmage	May be declined
Illegal Touching	9.8	3/5 and a loss of a down	Line of Scrimmage	See rule 8.03 b.
Ineligible Receiver	1.5	No yardage. Loss of a down only	N/A	
Intentional Grounding	9.4, 9.5, 9.6	3/5 and a loss of a down	Spot of the foul	Safety if foul occurs in end zone
Offensive Illegal Contact	10.2	5/10 and a loss of a down	Spot of the foul	Safety if foul occurs in end zone
Offensive Pass Interference	9.11	5/10 and a loss of a down	Line of Scrimmage	
Offside	7.1	3/5	Line of Scrimmage	Dead ball immediately when called.
Swiping/Flag Guarding	8.13	5/10 and a loss of a down	Spot of the foul	Safety if foul occurs in end zone
Too Many Men on the Field	2.1, 3.4, 3.16	3/5	Line of Scrimmage	May be declined

Unsportsmanlike Conduct	Section 11	3/10 and a loss of a down	Spot of the ball at the end of the play.
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Kickoff Penalties				
Penalty	Violates Rule(s):	Yardage (JV / Varsity)	Enforced from the:	Comments
Illegal Kick (Kickoff Out of Bounds)	3.6	N/A	Ball is placed at receiving team's 35-yard line	
Kicking Team Offside	3.5	3/5	Receiving Team's Choice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • kicking team's 20 yard line • end of the return 	Maybe declined
Short Free Kick	3.7	3/5	Kicking team's 20 yard line	3.06c.